

A View From The Hoof

Breeding for Behavior in the Hybrid Thoroughbred;

Emotional Conformation, reapplying natural selection...

By

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The Thoroughbred is a hybrid animal. The abrasive nature of circumstances that comes from humans breeding selectively for traits and nature's quest to breed for survival are antagonistic one to the other. As a breeder, you can breed the perfect horse from a physical conformation standpoint but if you ignore the forces of natural selection at work in your horse you will produce an inferior animal. If in your mating program you thought that your thoroughbred could be the next Triple Crown winner but that horse was a flop on the racetrack that is because the **Emotional Conformation** was not taken into account in the breeding, or indeed, the development of that athlete. What is the importance of Emotional Conformation? Emotional genetics are revealed within the Emotional Conformation of the horse. Nature has taught us that she will always win in the end, by destroying the antagonistic traits within the species through natural selection and starting over again, or simply allow another species to fill the gap.

Physically speaking the Thoroughbred Horse is a Hybrid animal. A whole animal, if you will, comprised of individually handed down parts of two or even three base species blended together. Just because we breed two physically different thoroughbreds, doesn't mean we've shuffled the deck. You take a baseball team to the World Series with a set roster, you can *shuffle* that roster about here and there and change players in the lineup and position on the field, but you are still playing with the same roster you came in with. Breeding the thoroughbred by looking only at the pedigrees of the mates involved is simply the act of trying to shuffle the cards of the inherent physical animal. Sometimes you get a Barb hind end and an Arabian head? Sometimes you get a different number of ribs, or any other variation of the whole. It is a crap shoot; you roll the dice when you breed for this or that based solely on the paperwork. But still, we try and try to force the issue, even if it takes 100 times to get that one homerun.

Nature has a rule for the hybrid species that no human will ever replace by shoving the square into the circle over and over again. A hybrid *anything* will seek to return to its most naturally occurring form, because it seeks out *optimum survivability*. When we work so hard to humanly select matings based upon strictly pedigree, physical conformation and performance sheets, we are overlooking the process of natural selection. If we do this enough, there will be a weakening of the breed as a whole. It could be argued that the thoroughbred as a *sound* animal, is on the

decline, and this would be our fault. You cannot continually remove the natural selection element from the process and expect great results without weakening the breed itself. It is not deer we are breeding, though we expect the horse to run as fast as the wind, over a long period of time, over variable surfaces, with an ever weakening physical constitution with often times erratic focus ability. Far too often it is the surface that is blamed for this or that, when a closer look at breeding over time may well show another story. Just because a *great* stallion is standing, and your *great* mare is on the schedule because the paperwork said it is a fantastic mating, doesn't a great race horse make. If it did there would be far less inconsistencies and throw-away horses.

I personally think we are playing a dangerous game we cannot truly win. So much effort is dedicated to *reproducing* the physical conformation that on paper *has to produce a winner*. Indeed we find time and again that this is not an assembly line of production, and nor should be approached like one. The hybrid species at best will promise to deliver you your *baseball team* of 15 players, though which 9 of the 15 on your roster will be applied to the first string, you have no control over. What is the difference maker?

It is not physical genetics alone that generate the successful athlete; it is the combination of both, **Emotional Genetics** and **Physical Genetics**. **EthoGrading** is an important aspect of the process for *emotional genetics are revealed within the Emotional Conformation of the horse*, and this is a key to adopting a more *natural selection* process to the mating program. There is a standard natural mantra that should not be forgotten that nature has provided for us. The mental capacity of the equine controls the physical output of the athlete. Having an awesome airplane with lots of capability built-in to its conformation is one thing, but who is piloting the craft, is the question.

If behavior is not considered in the mating process, at best you are rolling the dice in your crapshoot. Nature provides the animal with the mental capacity it needs, exactly fitted to the requirements necessary to use the body in the environment it lives in. Think of the differences in horse size and mentality from breed to breed. Look back in history and you will see that the successful species was always matched naturally, mind to body. Indeed, for species on the move forward, the mental capacity is greater than the physical ability on its own; this allows for growth in evolution, this is what you should be breeding for in your thoroughbred athlete. This is the pure definition of natural selection; mental capacity, agility and focus that are best fitted to the needs within a given environment to survive. The artificial environment does not provide the canvas for nature to paint this picture as we select by paper quite often just who is mated to who and for what reason. This is in essence a complete removal of the natural selection process but that doesn't mean an element of *natural selection* cannot be inserted into the artificial human environment.

Emotional Conformation and **Psychological Profiling** of the individual horse being proposed for mating can provide the extra information needed to increase the probability of a more successful outcome. Just because you mate two incredibly talented athletes with outstanding pedigrees doesn't mean that their progeny will be as outstanding. Because this is true, the result

is over-breeding and a saturation of the industry with far too many trash-can horses, deemed unworthy of financial support because *they don't win*, or are *unsound and breakdown*. Do you think? The economics of behavior will play a huge part in increasing your probability of success and decreasing the over-breeding problem of mating 20 in the hopes of getting 1 or 2 for your hope chest.

The *economics of behavior* are also housed within the **Emotional Conformation** of your athlete. The way you buy, sell, train, breed and even adopt out, are influenced by the overall Psychological Profile of the individual horse. Some *personality types* just shouldn't be mated together, and is a bad investment. The survival of a species designed to live in a social environment, where each is dependent on the other for survival in many ways, does not mate blindly. In the wild it is actually something of an anomaly when the lead stallion and the lead mare breed and produce a natural lead horse who will take over that, or another band of horses one day. In truth, it is often a lead stallion mated with an adjutant mare that produces a horse physically and mentally capable of leading. This is also just as likely for a subordinate stallion mated with the lead or adjutant mare. The reason for this is hidden within the evolution of survival; sustainability in life requires a constant influx of motion, even within a social group. In fact, all three scenarios are fairly equal in their likelihood of breeding a *herd leader*. This is because it is the **Emotional Conformation** of the individual horse that determines leadership. In a herd of wild horses, it is quite normal for the old and nearly decrepit mare to lead the herd to water, food and down through the mountains to safer places. What you are seeing are the survival aspects of natural selection and evolution.

When we select our breeding for success, we must remember how the process of evolution actually occurs. We like to look at pictures and we are fascinated by the changes in species physically through time. We also breed our race horses with how their physical make-up will operate in a given environment, or better said, what am I breeding for physically, turf, dirt or synthetic? It is not so much how the body is made to move over a given surface (environment) or how fast, as it is how the mental capacity is equipped to interpret the stimulus received. Physical evolution is secondary to mental evolution. Decision making ability stimulates physical change, not the other way around. The horse has an incredible ability to assimilate mentally and the thoroughbred is equipped to react very quickly to the directions given it. This is why understanding your individual horse's **Emotional Conformation** and having a Psychological Profile plays an integral part of every aspect of the industry. Allowance for what is innate, is a major factor in natural selection.

Adding the element of natural selection and applying it to the mating process that will economize your investments while advancing the overall welfare of your horses should be top on your list, but how?

You have worked out the short list of pedigree information that best fits your needs or wants. You have two stallions selected for your six mares. Because you have the added information of a

P-Type, Emotional Conformation Profile (see *Making The Grade*) of all six of your mares, you can then have the stallions evaluated in like manner. In such a way you are not only making smarter business decisions, you are adding another piece to the equation to increase your probability of a better outcome.

Foundation breeding is another avenue to re-invent a way for natural selection to provide for a more stable, well, stable. Foundation breeding happens quite naturally in the wild horse herds and is top on the list of the ongoing evolutionary process. It must be noted that we cannot make the mistake in thinking the evolutionary process vacant in our midst. It is alive and well and its job is to advance the species forward, giving it the mental ability to assimilate the body to changing stimulus. This is an important factor in the development of training protocols and mating selections alike. **Foundation Breeding is sustainable capacity mating.** Once you have found the desired physical conformations you are seeking, you must then mate together the likeliest **Emotional Conformations**, to advance the behavioral traits which will operate the machine properly. You can in essence, with proper research into your short list prospects, begin to create your *fantasy herd*, so to speak. You can work toward building the foundation with one stallion, or one or two broodmares.

Helter-skelter breeding is your enemy, not your friend. One year breeding to this, the second year breeding to something way outside the box and so and so forth allows for a constant state of confusion. This is antagonistic to the evolutionary process of assimilation. To build your *foundation herd*, breeding mental consistency far out ways breeding for conformational changes physically. In essence, you need to consider **Emotional Conformation** long before you consider what physical needs there will be to get you to where you want to go. Creating a family group by proxy or in reality is your best option for a sustainable program.

Sustainable capacity mating is *breeding forward*, being consistent in your mating/breeding program must also allow for the infusion of an outsider. The introduction of a new stallion to a key herd mare or two will continue the forward motion. To ensure the survival of the species, Mother Nature has set the herd dynamics up in such a way that foundation mares will at times be mated with rogue outsiders. The importance of this in the artificial environment and selected mating should be a cornerstone. If you have five closely related mares as your foundation herd, do not breed all five to one sire in your effort to sustain the foundation. Your foundation line is not governed by the stallion, but by your mares. Saturating your group will eventually mute the power of the line itself, and it will die out. Mother Nature views this as a dead-end; the line will eventually weaken because it is antagonistic to forward evolution, you will breed horses with seemingly great breeding lines, which are vulnerable to on track breakdowns.

In closing I feel this is worth repeating. The genetics of behavior are revealed within the **Emotional Conformation** of the horse, affecting the horse in all areas. Breeding without this consideration will at length weaken the breed, and this is self-evident. Nature's rule of survival is

best seen when you take a view from the hoof; changing the industry, means changing the way we breed the horses within it.